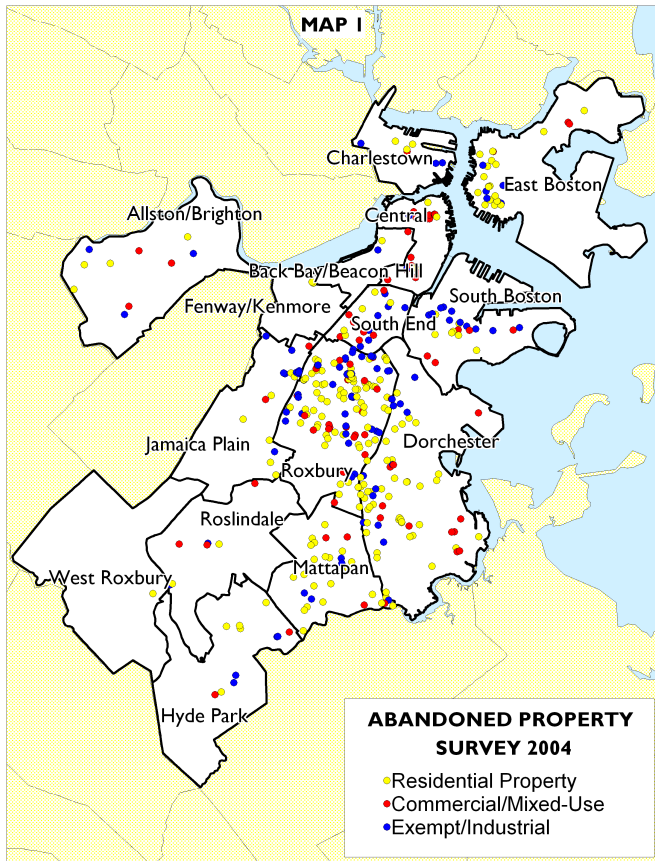




Abandoned Building Trends

Annual Report 2004

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Survey Highlights

The 2004 survey documents a continuing decrease in building abandonment, especially for residential property.

Since the survey began in 1997, the total number of abandoned buildings has decreased by 63%, from 1044 to 390 buildings. The number of residential abandoned buildings has decreased by 72%, from 796 to 220 buildings. Commercial building abandonment has decreased by 23%, from 187 buildings in 1997 to 144 buildings in 2004.

Since last year, the total number of abandoned buildings has decreased 16% from 464 buildings in 2003. The biggest decrease is in residential abandonment (19%), while commercial abandonment has decreased 13% since 2003.

78 of the 390 abandoned buildings in 2004 were newly identified, while 138 properties that appeared abandoned last year were renovated, demolished or are no longer abandoned.

Since the initiation of *Leading the Way** in 2000:

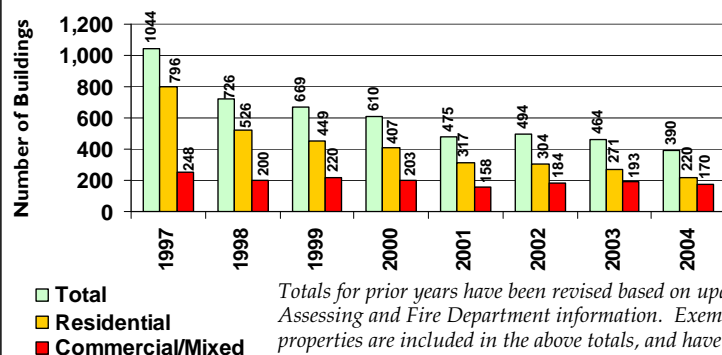
- The total number of abandoned buildings has decreased 36%.
- The number of residential abandoned buildings has decreased 46%.
- The number of abandoned mixed-use buildings has decreased by 38%, and abandoned commercial buildings by 11%.

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**Leading the Way* was the three year (2000 – 2003) City of Boston initiative to create and preserve affordable housing. See www.cityofboston.gov/dnd.

Abandoned Buildings by Property Type



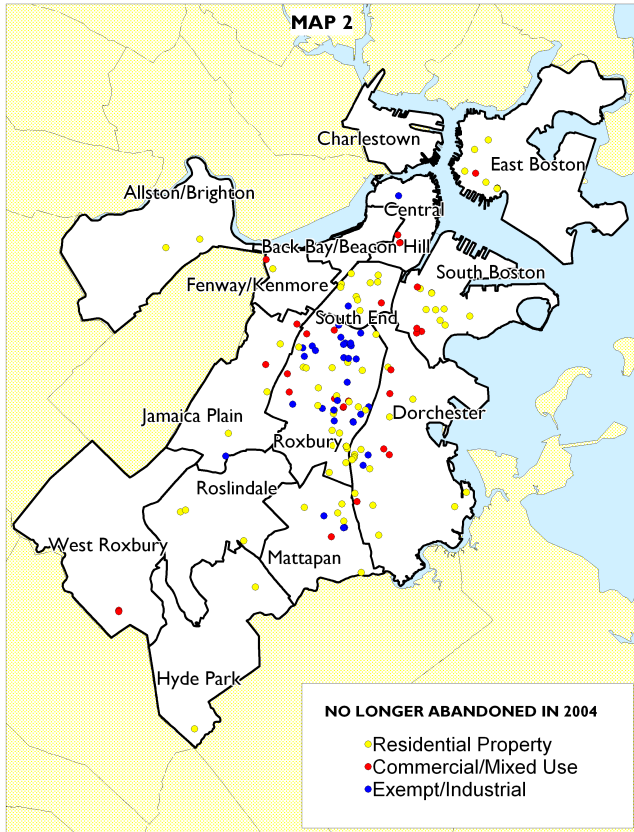
Totals for prior years have been revised based on updated Assessing and Fire Department information. Exempt properties are included in the above totals, and have been classified "residential" or "commercial/mixed" based on visual inspection.



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Survey Methodology

The abandoned building* survey is based on information gathered in previous surveys and data on buildings that are likely to be abandoned. A street by street survey is completed for most of the city, including a resurvey of previously identified buildings. This area includes 99% of the abandoned buildings identified from 1998 to 2003. A photo is taken of each property and a form is completed from a visual inspection of the exterior of the property for overall condition and rehab status. Data from the Assessing and Fire Departments are then used to enhance the street-by-street survey.

*) An abandoned building is any residential, commercial, industrial or mixed-use building (excludes sheds and garages on residential property) which is not occupied and has visible signs of physical distress (boarded, burned, open to the elements, otherwise deteriorated, etc.). Property used for storage may be surveyed as abandoned if it is boarded or appears otherwise unoccupied.

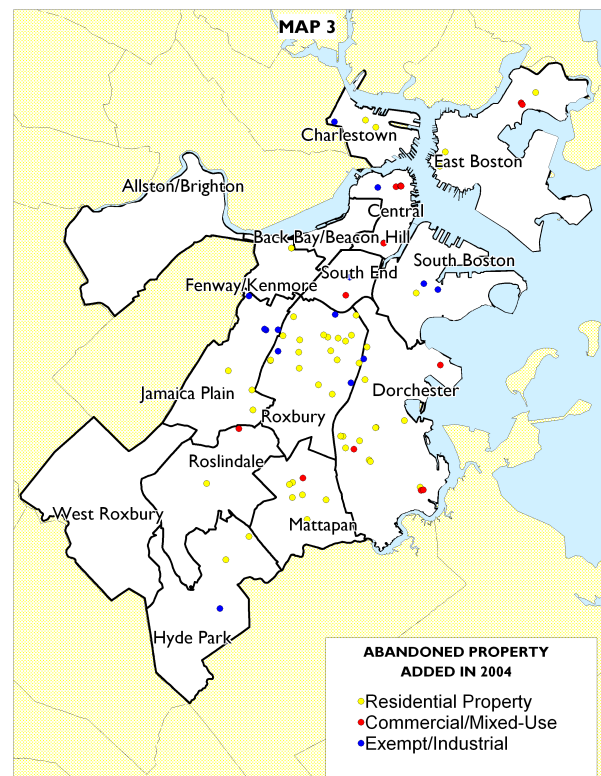
Changes in the Inventory of Abandoned Buildings

Map 2 shows the 138 buildings surveyed as abandoned in 2003 that were found to be *no longer abandoned* in the 2004 survey.

- 62% (86) were residential buildings.
- These 138 buildings were on the abandoned building list for an average of 2.7 years.

Map 3 shows the 78 buildings that were *added* to the abandoned building list.

- 68% (53) of the newly identified buildings were residential. This was fewer than were removed from the inventory, suggesting continued strength in the housing market.
- 24% (19) were commercial, and only 8% (6) were mixed-use.





Residential Abandonment Trends

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Chart 2

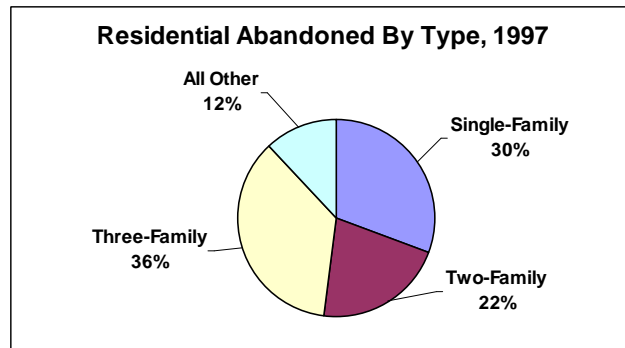
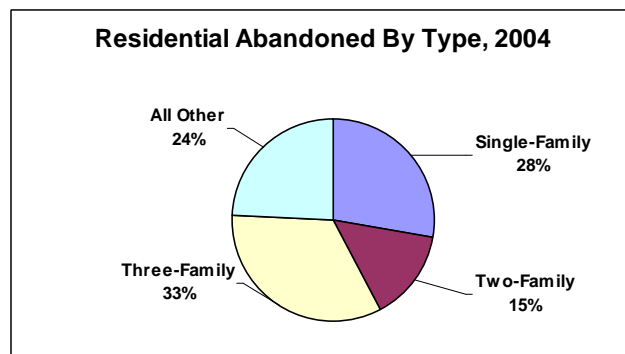


Chart 3



Tax Status of Abandoned Residential Buildings

Charts 4 and 5 relate to the tax status of residential abandoned buildings.

From 1997 to 2004, the proportion of buildings that were publicly owned has remained constant. In other words, the number of publicly owned abandoned buildings has been reduced at the same rate as the reduction in all abandoned buildings.

The proportion of privately owned, tax current buildings is lower than in 1997 but has increased 8% since last year. On the other hand, the proportion of privately owned abandoned buildings that owe taxes is higher than in 1997, but is down 8% from 30% in 2003.

Residential Abandonment By Unit Type

Charts 2 and 3 show the proportion of residential abandoned buildings in each unit size category (single-family, two-family, etc.).

Abandonment rates have increased for buildings in the "All Other" category, including exempt, 121A and multi-family property, up from 16% in 2003 and double what they were in 1997. Abandonment rates for two-family buildings are down from 22% last year to 15% of the pie, suggesting a pick-up in rehab activity of such properties. The three-family abandonment rate continues to be the highest for residential buildings.

Chart 4

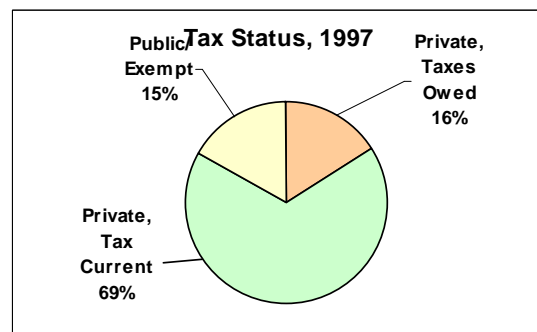
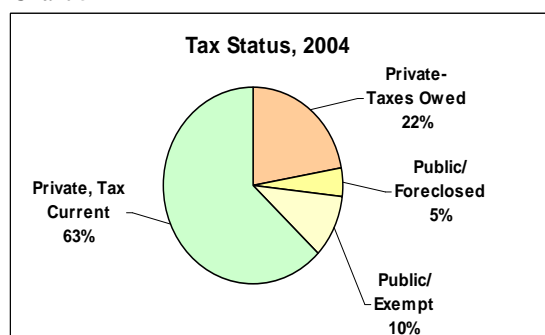


Chart 5





Residential Abandonment *Trends*

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Chart 6

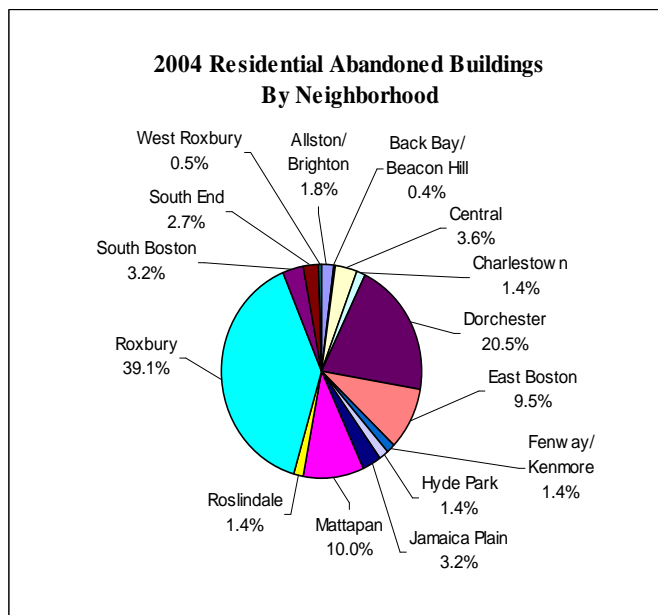


Table 1: Residential Abandoned Buildings By Neighborhood

Neighborhood	Counts			Change	
	1997	2003	2004	Pct97-04	Pct03-04
Allston/Brighton	3	6	4	33.3%	-33.3%
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	2	1	1	-50.0%	0.0%
Central	14	5	8	-42.9%	60.0%
Charlestown	1	0	3	200.0%	N/A
Dorchester	166	50	45	-72.9%	-10.0%
East Boston	52	24	21	-59.6%	-12.5%
Fenway/Kenmore	1	2	3	200.0%	50.0%
Hyde Park	44	4	3	-93.2%	-25.0%
Jamaica Plain	37	9	7	-81.1%	-22.2%
Mattapan	101	24	22	-78.2%	-8.3%
Roslindale	11	5	3	-72.7%	-40.0%
Roxbury	307	109	86	-72.0%	-21.1%
South Boston	7	15	7	0.0%	-53.3%
South End	47	15	6	-87.2%	-60.0%
West Roxbury	3	2	1	-66.7%	-50.0%
CITYWIDE	796	271	220	-72.4%	-18.8%

Residential Abandoned Buildings By Neighborhood

From 1997 to 2004, there has been a 72% decrease in the number of abandoned residential buildings. As in 2003, the bulk of these properties are in the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, East Boston and Mattapan, concentrated within a half-mile of the Blue Hill Avenue corridor.

Roxbury continues to have the largest number of residential abandoned buildings (86), but the number is down dramatically since the beginning of the survey in 1997 (-72%) and the number continues to drop, with a healthy 21% decrease in abandonment from 2003 to 2004.

While Dorchester has seen a large decrease in residential abandonment since 1997 (-73%), the rate of decrease from 2003 to 2004 (-10%) was less than the citywide figure of -19% for that period.

Of those neighborhoods with a significant number of abandoned residential buildings in 1997, Hyde Park has had the largest reduction (-93%) in such buildings. Since last year, the South End and South Boston have seen the largest decreases (-60% and -53% respectively). Of those same neighborhoods, East Boston has seen the slowest decline.

While residential abandonment is shown as increasing since both 1997 and 2003 in the Central area downtown, in Charlestown and in Fenway/Kenmore, those areas have so few abandoned residences that these increases are less significant.



Commercial Abandonment Trends

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Chart 7

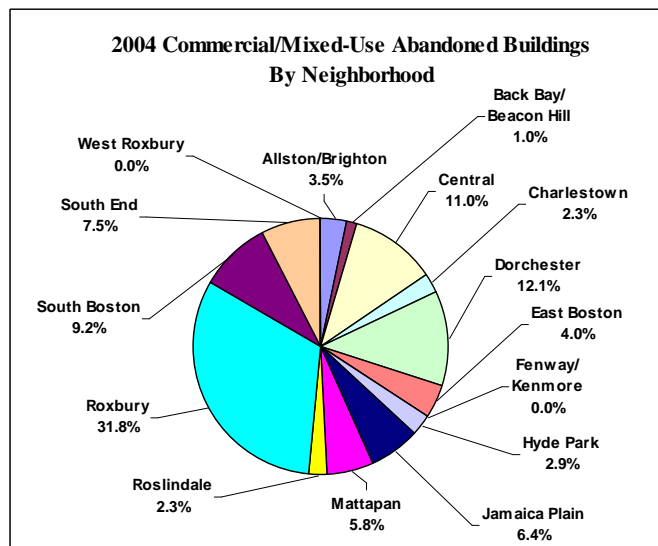


Table 2: Commercial/Mixed Use Abandoned Buildings By Neighborhood

Neighborhood	Counts			Change	
	1997	2003	2004	Pct97-04	Pct03-04
Allston/Brighton	5	6	6	20.0%	0.0%
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	1	2	2	100.0%	0.0%
Central	30	16	16	-46.7%	0.0%
Charlestown	0	4	4	N/A	0.0%
Dorchester	30	24	21	-30.0%	-12.5%
East Boston	30	7	7	-76.7%	0.0%
Fenway/Kenmore	4	1	0	-100.0%	-100.0%
Hyde Park	13	7	5	-61.5%	-28.6%
Jamaica Plain	15	10	11	-26.7%	10.0%
Mattapan	13	9	10	-23.1%	11.1%
Roslindale	5	3	4	-20.0%	33.3%
Roxbury	77	70	55	-28.6%	-21.4%
South Boston	2	19	16	700.0%	-15.8%
South End	22	14	13	-40.9%	-7.1%
West Roxbury	1	1	0	-100.0%	-100.0%
CITYWIDE	248	193	170	-31.5%	-11.9%

Commercial & Mixed-Use Abandoned Buildings By Neighborhood

Commercial and mixed-use building abandonment has decreased more slowly than for residential property. From 1997 to 2004, there has been only a 31% decrease in the number of abandoned commercial/mixed-use buildings, and only a 12% decrease since last year.

Commercial uses are more difficult to survey accurately, however, since buildings that are actively used as warehouses are often boarded up and may appear derelict and abandoned.

This may be especially true in South Boston, where the dramatic (700%) increase in abandonment since 1997 may be due to more rigorous recent surveys, in an area where old industrial buildings are becoming obsolete, but where new residential development has been on the increase. South Boston's 16% reduction since last year is probably a more accurate trend indicator.

Looking at changes from 2003 may be more informative for judging abandonment trends in commercial properties elsewhere as well. Hyde Park, Roxbury and South Boston have seen the largest decreases for neighborhoods with more than token abandonment, while Mattapan has the largest increase in commercial and mixed use abandonment for such areas.



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Intractable Abandonment

Buildings that reappear on the survey year after year are signs of “intractable” abandonment that may occur more in some areas than in others. Table 3 lists Boston neighborhoods with a count of their abandoned buildings in 2004, sorted by the average number of years they have been previously listed as abandoned. The most “intractable” abandonment, then, occurs in the South End, East Boston, Roxbury and Mattapan.

Of 141 properties on this year’s survey that have been abandoned four or more years, over half are residential, while 38 are commercial or industrial, and 22 are publicly owned.

The City holds the largest number (35) of buildings surveyed as abandoned. 22 of these are foreclosures for non-payment of taxes, and most are being routed for redevelopment or disposition by DND. The rest are held by other city entities, including the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Properties in Tax Title

Table 4 at the left is a breakdown of taxes owed, sorted by Assessing land use categories, which are described in a note below the table.

77 of the 390 properties on this year’s survey are held by private owners who are in tax arrears totalling over \$4.4 million. 42 owners owe \$10,000 or more, and two properties account for an arrearage of over a million dollars each.

20 commercial and industrial properties account for over three-quarters of this arrearage; three-family and one-family properties account for most of the rest.

Following Up . . .

DND is notifying private owners whose property has been identified as abandoned, to find out whether the property is actually abandoned or if there are plans to renovate or sell it. DND will also attempt to assist qualified owners looking for financial or redevelopment resources.

Table 3: Average Number of Years Abandoned

Neighborhood	Count	AvgNumYr
South End	19	4.4
East Boston	28	3.7
Roxbury	138	3.6
Mattapan	29	3.5
Fenway/Kenmore	3	3.3
Dorchester	69	3.2
Hyde Park	11	3.0
Central	24	2.8
Jamaica Plain	18	2.7
South Boston	23	2.7
Allston/Brighton	10	2.1
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	3	2.0
West Roxbury	1	2.0
Roslindale	7	1.9
Charlestown	7	1.6
CITYWIDE	390	3.3

Table 4: Tax Arrearage By Assessing Land Use

LandUse	SumOfAmountDue	Count
A	\$42,508.80	2
C	\$3,336,384.26	16
CL	\$30,773.47	1
I	\$139,223.48	3
R1	\$293,797.26	19
R2	\$117,702.78	12
R3	\$360,873.24	18
R4	\$51,067.28	4
RC	\$45,328.39	2
TOTALS	\$4,417,658.96	77

Land Use categories include Apartment (A), Commercial (C), Commercial Land (CL), Industrial (I), One-Family to Three-Family Residential (R1-R3), 4-6 Family Residential (R4) and Mixed Use (RC). The single commercial land parcel includes a structure with zero value.

Abandoned Building Trends is published annually by the Policy Development and Research Division of the City’s Department of Neighborhood Development. For more information about this publication, contact Larry Braman at (617) 635-0204 or e-mail lbraman.dnd@ci.boston.ma.us